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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KIGALI 03782

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
 TAGS: PGOV, RW
 SUBJECT: POLITICAL PARTIES IN RWANDA

REF: KIGALI 3739 NOTAL

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT.

SUMMARY

2. POWER-SHARING NEGOTIATIONS IN ARUSHA HAVE
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 ENCOURAGED US TO ESTIMATE THE RELATIVE POWER OF
 POLITICAL PARTIES IN RWANDA. HABYARIMANA'S MRND
 REMAINS AN IMPORTANT POLITICAL FORCE IN RWANDA. IT
 WILL NOT NEGOTIATE ITSELF OUT OF BUSINESS, BUT MAY
 ACCEPT A MINORITY ROLE AFTER ELECTIONS. AN MDR, PL,
 RPF COALITION COULD CAPTURE POWER IN RWANDA THROUGH
 FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS. THE CDR HAS THE POTENTIAL
 TO CREATE VIOLENCE IN THE COUNTRY, BUT NEITHER IT NOR
 ANY OF THE OTHER SMALL PARTIES NOW HAVE THE
 ATTRACTIVENESS TO MAKE A MAJOR DIFFERENCE IN THE
 POLITICAL BALANCE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. END

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SUMMARY.

3. THERE HAVE BEEN NO REAL ELECTIONS IN RWANDA SINCE INDEPENDENCE, THERE ARE NO POLITICAL POLLS, AND THEREFORE VERY LITTLE OBJECTIVE DATA ON WHICH TO BASE A JUDGEMENT OF THE RELATIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VARIOUS POLITICAL PARTIES WHICH HAVE BEEN FORMED IN THE LAST YEAR. IT IS THEREFORE PREMATURE AND HIGHLY RISKY TO TRY TO MAKE THIS ASSESSMENT. NEVERTHELESS, IT SEEMS TO US IMPORTANT TO TRY BECAUSE THE ARUSHA NEGOTIATIONS ON POWER SHARING HAVE NOW REACHED A POINT WHERE EACH SIDE'S PERCEPTION OF THE POLITICAL REALITIES WITHIN THE COUNTRY WILL SHAPE ITS NEGOTIATING POSITION, AND ULTIMATELY ITS DECISION AS TO WHETHER OR NOT AN AGREEMENT CAN BE MADE.

4. WE THEREFORE OFFER THE FOLLOWING GUESTIMATES ON THE BASIS OF THE PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL RALLIES, THE OBSERVANCE OF PARTY FLAGS AND HATS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, SOME GENERALLY ACCEPTED

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PERCEPTIONS OF REGIONAL DIFFERENCES SUPPORTED BY MASS PROTESTS AGAINST LOCAL LEADERS BELIEVED TO BE OF A PARTY OTHER THANNE ZPJQOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, A KEEN EAR FOR RUMORS AND SOME EDUCATED GUESSES.

MRND

5. FOUNDED IN 1975 TO BE THE PARTY UNIQUE OF PRESIDENT HABYARIMANA AFTER HIS COUP IN 1973, THE MRND HAS ALWAYS REPRESENTED THE NORTHERN PREFECTURES OF RUHENERI AND GISENYI. THAT'S WHERE ITS LEADERSHIP COMES FROM, AND THAT'S WHERE ITS STRENGTH IS. IT ALSO IS STRONG IN THE THIRD NORTHERN PREFECTURE OF BYUMBA, ALTHOUGH POLITICAL ACTIVITY THERE IS SOMEWHAT MORE SUBDUEO BECAUSE OF THE WAR ALONG ITS NORTHERN BORDER. IN SEVENTEEN YEARS OF POWER, THE MRND HAS FORMED SOME ROOTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. IT HAS THE ONLY NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED POLITICAL LEADER IN THE COUNTRY. IT ORGANIZES RALLIES WELL AND CONTINUES TO CONTROL THE ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS IN MOST PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. PEOPLE ARE ACCUSTOMED TO VOTING FOR THE MRND, AND UNLESS THEY CAN BE SHOWN SOLID REASONS TO

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CHANGE, PROBABLY WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO IN ORDER TO STAY IN THE GOOD FAVOR OF THE POWERS THAT BE.

6. THE MRND YOUTH MOVEMENT IS THE STRONGEST YOUTH MOVEMENT IN THE COUNTRY, OFTEN VIOLENT AND INTOLERANT OF OTHER YOUTH MOVEMENTS, BUT APPARENTLY REASONABLY WELL DISCIPLINED.

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7. WITH THESE STRENGTHS, THE MRND CONTINUES TO BE A MAJOR FORCE IN THE POLITICS OF RWANDA. IT COULD CONCEIVABLY WIN A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WITH HABYARIMANA AT ITS HEAD. IT PROBABLY WOULD NOT WIN A PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION, BUT WOULD BE ABLE TO PICK UP 30 TO 40 PERCENT OF THE VOTES FOR A NEW PARLIAMENT. IT CANNOT BE IGNORED.

8. SOME OPPONENTS OF THE MRND BELIEVE THAT THE MRND AS A PARTY IS FINISHED, IF IT EVER REALLY DID EXIST

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AS A PARTY, AND THAT ITS SOUL HAS BEEN LOST TO THE CDR, AND ONLY A SHELL REMAINS. IT SEEMS TO US THAT IF THE OPPONENTS REALLY BELIEVED THIS, THEY WOULD BE MORE WILLING TO APPROACH FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS SOON RATHER THAN HOLDING OUT FOR A MUCH MORE DELAYED ELECTORAL PROCESS.

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MDR

9. BECAUSE OF THE HISTORY OF THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE VICTORY OF THE MDR PAREMEHUTU IN THE ONLY FREE ELECTIONS HELD IN THIS COUNTRY, THE MDR HAS A STRONG CLAIM TO DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMACY. IT ALSO HAS DEEP RESENTMENTS FOR THE COUP D'ETAT WHICH BROUGHT HABYARIMANA AND THE MRND INTO POWER AND ITS AFTERMATH IN WHICH MANY MDR LEADERS WERE KILLED. BUT MORE THAN HALF OF THE POPULATION OF THE COUNTRY HAS BEEN BORN SINCE THE OUSTER OF THE MDR IN 1973, AND ITS MOST LOYAL CADRE OF SUPPORTERS ARE AMONG THOSE WHO REMEMBER THE PRE-COUP DAYS, THAT IS THE OLDER GENERATION.

10. THE MDR IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO CONTROL GITARAMA IN ANY FORM OF ELECTIONS, IS STRONG IN BUTARE AND GIKONGORO AND PROBABLY CYANGUGU AND KIGUNBO. EVIDENCE OF ITS STRENGTH COMES FROM REPEATED UPRISINGS IN THE GITARAMA COMMUNES TO REMOVE THEIR MRND-APPOINTED BOURGEMESTRES AND PUT IN THEIR PLACE PEOPLE WITH MDR LOYALTY. (SOME MRND-APPOINTED OFFICIALS HAVE RETAINED THEIR POSTS BY CHANGING THEIR

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PARTY AFFILIATION TO MDR). OTHER EVIDENCE IS THE NUMBER OF FLAGS AND RED AND BLACK HATS THAT WE SEE THROUGHOUT THIS REGION.

11. AND IF REGIONALISM WAS NOT A POLITICAL FACTOR PRIOR TO THE TIME OF INDEPENDENCE, IT HAS CERTAINLY BECOME SO SINCE THE COUP D'ETAT. NORTHERNERS, BLAMING THE PREVIOUS REGIME FOR FAVORITISM OF THE

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SOUTH, HAVE CLEARLY REVERSED THE FLOWS DURING THE LAST SEVENTEEN YEARS, FAVORING NORTHERN PREFECTURES WITH DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURES, SCHOOLS, UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS, SENIOR CIVIL SERVICE APPOINTMENTS, AND DOMINANCE OF THE MILITARY. THIS IS A POLITICAL FACT WHICH LEADS MOST PEOPLE IN THE SOUTH TO SUPPORT PARTIES OTHER THAN THE MRND. THE MDR IS CLEARLY THE MAJOR COMPETITOR IN MOST OF THE SOUTH AND RETAINS A SMALL BUT LOYAL GROUP OF SUPPORTERS IN THE NORTH.

12. AT THE PRESENT TIME WE DOUBT THAT THE MDR COULD WIN A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, BUT EXPECT THAT IN A PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION, THE MDR COULD EASILY EQUAL AND POSSIBLY EXCEED THE VOTES FOR THE MRND, THAT IS SOMEWHERE IN THE 30 TO 45 PERCENT RANGE OF THE VOTES.

LIBERAL PARTY (PL)

13. THE PL HAS STRENGTH IN BUTARE, BUGESERA AND OTHER PARTS OF THE KIGALI REGION. ALTHOUGH THREE OF ITS FOUR TOP LEADERS ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL ARE HUTU, THE PARTY'S FOLLOWING IS ALMOST ENTIRELY TUTSI. AS SUCH IT COULD NEVER EXPECT TO GET MORE THAN 10 OR 15 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE IN A FREE AND FAIR ELECTION. THE PL HAS HAD A MAJOR IMPACT ON POLITICS IN RWANDA DURING THE PAST YEAR BECAUSE IT APPEALS TO THE TUTSI BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF ITS CLOSE AND CONTINUING ALLIANCE WITH THE MDR.

14. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE RPF WOULD JOIN WITH THE PL TO FORM A SINGLE PARTY. BUT EVEN WITH THE TWO

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TOGETHER, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE PARTY COULD GAIN
MORE THAN 15 PERCENT. THUS EVEN A MERGED PL AND RPF
WOULD HAVE TO MAINTAIN THE ALLIANCE WITH THE MDR IN
ORDER TO ASPIRE TO NATIONAL PROMINENCE.

PSD

15. THE PSD AS AN OFFSHOOT OF THE OLD MDR PARMEHUTU
HAS MOST OF ITS STRENGTH IN THE SOUTH. BUT THAT'S
NOT SAYING MUCH. AT THE PRESENT TIME THE PSD SEEMS
TO BE A SMALLER PARTY THAN THE PL, NOT EXPECTED TO
FIND MORE THAN 5 OR 10 PERCENT OF THE VOTE AND ALMOST

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ALL OF THAT IN THE SOUTH, GIKONGORO, PERHAPS BUTARE,
AND PERHAPS A FEW CENTERS IN KIGALI ITSELF.

16. THE PSD HAS SEVERAL PROBLEMS. ONE IS THAT AMONG
ITS LEADERSHIP ARE SOME TIRED AND DISCREDITED PEOPLE
SUCH AS THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE. THE OTHER IS
THAT IT HAS NO PARTICULAR IDEOLOGICAL PLACE IN THE
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POLITICAL SPECTRUM. IT WAS FORMED BY GATABAZI, A
VERY ABLE MAN, TO MOVE A LITTLE TO THE LEFT OF THE
OLD MDR, MEANING LESS PRO-HUTU. BUT THE MDR/PL
ALLIANCE IN EFFECT SQUEEZED THE PSD OFF TO ONE SIDE.

17. THE OTHER PROBLEM THE PSD HAS HAD HAS BEEN THE
EFFORT OF SOME OF ITS LEADERS, IN PARTICULAR VICE
PRESIDENT NGANGO, TO FLIRT WITH AN ALLIANCE WITH THE
MRND. IT WAS WIDELY KNOWN IN DECEMBER, THAT THE PSD
WAS NEGOTIATING WITH THE MRND FOR ENTRANCE INTO THE
ILL-CONCEIVED NSANZIMANA GOVERNMENT WHICH LASTED FROM
DECEMBER 30, 1991 TO APRIL 16, 1992. GATABAZI HAS
SOUGHT TO RECOVER HIS STANDING AS A MEMBER OF THE
COMITE DE CONCERTATION (MDR, PL AND PSD) BY STRIDENT
ANTI-MRND STATEMENTS OVER THE KIBUYE INCIDENTS, BUT
EVEN MANY OF THOSE WHO AGREED WITH THE ACCUSATIONS
WONDERED ABOUT THE SINCERITY OF THE SOURCE.

CDR

18. ALTHOUGH THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CDR IS FROM
CYANGUGU, THE CDR IS ESSENTIALLY A NORTHERN RIGHT-
WING PARTY. IT SEEMS TO BE STILL GROWING. IT HAS
FLANCKED THE MRND ON THE RIGHT WITH ITS CLEAR RACIST
MESSAGE OF HUTU SUPREMACY.

19. IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT THE PRESIDENT'S WIFE
IS ONE OF THE STAUNCHEST SUPPORTERS OF CDR. EITHER
THAT OR SHE IS HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH CHAIRMAN MARTIN
BUCYANA AT WHOSE HOME SHE IS SEEN REGULARLY. WHETHER
THIS IS TRUE OR NOT, IT SEEMS QUITE CLEAR THAT
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MEMBERS OF THE PRESIDENT'S FAMILY ARE IDEOLOGICALLY
MEMBERS OF THE CDR WHILE CONTINUING TO SUPPORT THE
PRESIDENT AND HIS PARTY.

20. IN EFFECT THE CDR IS THE PAT BUCHANAN OF THE
MRND. WHAT MAKES IT MORE DAWGEROUS IS THAT IT HAS
THE POTENTIAL TO ATTRACT HUTU SUPREMacists MEMBERS
FROM THE MDR, AND IT HAS ALREADY SHOWN ITS
WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY TO STIR UP VIOLENCE AGAINST
THE MINORITY TUTSI.

21. IN AN ATOMOSPHERE OF PEACE, WE BELIEVE THE CDR
WOULD BE MARGINALIZED AND NOT BE ABLE TO TAKE MORE
THAN A MINOR SHARE OF THE VOTING. WITH THE
CONTINUATION OF WAR, HOWEVER, THE CDR WILL BE ABLE TO
CONTINUE TO EXPLOIT THE FEAR AND ANGER OF HUTU AT THE
CONTINUING ETHNIC WAR ON THE BORDER. NEVERTHELESS,
THE PARTY'S MESSAGE IS SO HARD AND THE RWANDAN
POPULATION SEEMS SO TIRED OF THE WAR, THAT WE DOUBT
IF THE CDR COULD COME UP WITH MORE THAN 20 PERCENT OF
THE VOTE EVEN IN QDDTFTQR PARTIES

22. AT PRESENT THE OTHER 11 PARTIES, INCLUDING THE
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WHO HAVE A MEMBER IN THE CABINET,
DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH POPULAR FOLLOWING TO SHOW UP ON AN
OPINION POLL IF ONE SHOULD BE TAKEN.

ELECTORAL SYSTEM

23. THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF THE VARIOUS PARTIES
WILL DEPEND TO A CERTAIN EXTENT ON WHAT ELECTORAL
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SYSTEM IS FINALLY CHOSEN. THE PRESENT DRAFT LAW HAS
IN IT A MIXED SYSTEM, ONE IN WHICH THERE ARE
SINGLE-MEMBER CONSTITUENCIES OF THREE OR FOUR
COMMUNES FOR THE MAJORITY OF THE PARLIAMENT, BUT
PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION TO FILL A NUMBER OF
SEATS. WITHOUT THE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION, IT
IS POSSIBLE THAT ONLY THE MRND AND THE MDR WOULD BE
REPRESENTED IN THE PARLIAMENT. ADDING A PROPORTIONAL
REPRESENTATION COMPONENT WOULD CERTAINLY BRING IN

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TUTSI MEMBERS OF THE PL AND/OR RPF, AND HUTU SUPREMacists FROM THE CDR. THE PSD MIGHT SLIP IN A MEMBER OR TWO UNDER EITHER SYSTEM, AND IF THE COMITE DE CONCERTATION OF THE MDR, PL AND PSD SURVIVES, THERE COULD BE LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS MADE TO FAVOR A PSD OR PL LEADER IN CERTAIN CONSTITUENCIES WHERE THE MDR DID NOT FEEL STRONG ENOUGH TO TAKE ON THE MRND ALL BY

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ITSELF. FOR THE MOMENT, NONE OF THE OTHER SMALL PARTIES SEEKS TO HAVE ENOUGH POPULAR SUPPORT TO ENTER THE PARLIAMENT UNDER A PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM WHICH REQUIRES THE RECEIPT OF 5 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE. IF THAT WERE TO DROP TO ONE PERCENT AS IN SOME COUNTRIES, WE COULD EXPECT TO SEE AN ISLAMIC PARTY CANDIDATE, AND PERHAPS AN ECOLOGIST. THEREFORE LOWERING THE THRESHOLD OF PARTICIPATION WILL CLEARLY BE AN OBJECTIVE OF THE SMALL PARTIES.

CONCLUSION

24. ALTHOUGH THE RPF AND A COUPLE OF THE MAJOR INTERNAL OPPOSITION PARTIES WOULD LIKE TO USE THE CURRENT ARUSHA NEGOTIATIONS TO GET RID OF PRESIDENT HABYARIMANA AND HIS ENTIRE PARTY STRUCTURE, SUCH AN OBJECTIVE SEEKS TOTALLY INCONSISTENT WITH THE POLITICAL BALANCE NOW EXISTING IN RWANDA.

25. WE THINK THE EXISTING POWER BALANCE SHOULD BE RESPECTED IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS FOR TWO REASONS: FIRST, IT SEEKS DIFFICULT TO CREATE A DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE IF THE TRANSITION ARRANGEMENT DOES NOT RESPECT SOMETHING CLOSE TO THE BALANCES UNDERSTOOD AND PERCEIVED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE COUNTRY. IN OTHER WORDS, DEMOCRACY IS UNLIKELY TO BE CREATED BY AN UNREPRESENTATIVE TRANSITIONAL FORMULA. SECOND AND PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANT, A NEW STRUCTURE WHICH VIOLATES THE RWANDANS' PERCEPTION OF FAIRNESS, WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED BY THE OTHER SIDE. A STRUCTURE WHICH GIVES INORDINATE AUTHORITY TO THE RPF/PL WILL BE

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VIOLENTLY RESISTED BY THE CDR AND MRND. SUCH A STRUCTURE WOULD CREATE CIVIL WAR IN PLACE OF THE GUERRILLA WAR THAT NOW EXISTS. A NEGOTIATION WHICH DOES NOT GIVE ADEQUATE REPRESENTATION TO THE RPF WILL LEAD TO A CONTINUATION OF THE GUERRILLA WAR.

26. IN COALITION WITH OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES, THE RPF HAS A GOOD CHANCE OF JOINING A MAJORITY GOVERNMENT IN RWANDA AFTER THE NEXT ELECTIONS, A GOVERNMENT WHICH COULD REPLACE HABYARIMANA'S MRND PARTY AND HAVE THE LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY TO CHANGE THE

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CONSTITUTION TO THE FORM AGREED BY A NEW COALITION.
IF THEY INSIST ON MORE THEY RUN THE RISK OF EITHER
CONTINUING THE CURRENT WAR OR DRIVING RWANDA INTO
HUTU-TUTSI CIVIL WAR.

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